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1. Editorial

Something that exercises your Editor in these early months of 2014 is the future of the UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger of Disappearing, of which I am also the editor. Our Foundation has since 2009 acted on behalf of UNESCO to liaise with consultants who respond to comments from users of the on-line version of the Atlas. The third edition was made possible by funding from the government of Norway. That source of funding having now dried up, the Section for Intangible Heritage at UNESCO has been seeking new donors from among the member states – so far, in vain. The Atlas is thus in some danger of becoming an orphan, but it is, so to speak, still tied by an umbilical cord to UNESCO, because the on-line version of the Atlas is accessible through the unesco.org web-site, and of course all the comments, monitored by FEL, that result in changes to the on-line atlas (and thus eventually to the next print edition) pass through UNESCO headquarters and their IT staff.

In March 2014 a consultative meeting was arranged by the Netherlands UNESCO office to ensure the continued future of the Atlas by introducing it to possible future stakeholders. It will be important to allow this project to develop and monitor the world’s languages in danger. The continued association of FEL with the project seems appropriate. After all, our mandate is to monitor the welfare of the world’s weaker languages. The Atlas is now in its third print edition, and the on-line version has been available continuously for five years now, and is still visited regularly as a valuable resource. The meeting revealed some potential partners who would be willing to keep the project going, expand the functions of the atlas and bring in some innovations, and these options are due to be explored at a further meeting later in the year.

Finally, don’t forget our forthcoming 18th annual conference, to be held between 14th and 17th September 2014 in Naha, Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands, Japan.

Christopher Moseley

2. Development of the Foundation

FEL XVIII to be held in Naha, Okinawa, Japan - 14-17 Sept. 2014

“Indigenous Languages: Value to the Community”

Our theme this year is to consider the kinds of value that an indigenous language may bring to its community and environment. We meet in Okinawa, the main island of the Ryūkyū Islands in the extreme southwest of the Japanese archipelago, where no fewer than six, mutually unintelligible, Ryukyuan languages are spoken.

All Ryukyuan languages are endangered today, though part of the Japonic language family, which also includes Japanese and Hachijo. The Ryukyuan languages separated from Japanese sometime before the 7th century and preserve several phonological distinctions already lost in Old Japanese. It is a probable conclusion that settlers from some part of Kyushu moved into the Ryukyu Islands from the 8th century onward and that the Ryukyuan languages developed on the basis of Kyushu Japonic (while Hachijo is on the basis of Eastern Japonic). Hence these languages are not daughter but sister languages of Japanese. What languages were spoken before in the Ryukyus and how they influenced the formation of the present Ryukyuan languages remains unknown.

It was only after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, with the establishment of Japan’s modern nation state, that the Japanese language came to these islands. It has, however, since spread with such fervor that all Ryukyuan languages are set to become extinguished by 2050 if no counter-action is taken.

Attempts to safeguard the Ryukyuan languages are rather recent and language revitalization efforts in a nascent stage. Given this situation in the Ryukyus, FEL XVIII seeks to discuss the societal benefit of maintaining indigenous languages in order to outline and clarify the benefits indigenous languages offer the communities speaking them.
FEL Grants awarded for 2014

The Foundation has announced the winners of its annual round of grants to assist in the promotion and revival of languages under threat. This year we were able to make use of a separate stream of funding, for those applicants concerned with documentation who undertook to make use of the special ‘Navlipi’ script devised by the donor, Dr. Prasanna Chandrasekhar. Three of this year’s grant recipients availed themselves of this special stream of funding. The following grants have been awarded, and we congratulate all the recipients:

Recipient / Country / Language / Grant in USS / Context of use

John Clifton / USA / Budukh, Quba district, Azerbaijan / $1485 / Transcription of texts (Navlipi)

Rena Stanton / Australia / Kungarakan, Australia / $902 / Documentation (Navlipi)


Bamwiji Musumbwa / D.R.Congo / Kinyindu, D.R.Congo / $993 / Translation of proverbs

Beatrice Clayre / UK / Sa’ban, Malaysia / $1000 / Development of reading materials

Hannah S. Sarvasy / Australia / Nungon, Uruwa River Valley, Kabwum District, Morobe province, Papua New Guinea / $958 / Production of a dictionary

Robyn Giffen / Canada / Nabit, Ghana / $990 / Documentation

Artis Orbis / Latvia / Livonian, Latvia / $880 / Teaching

Christina Murmann / Germany / Miriwoong, Australia / $902 / Documenting and training

Catherine Carry / Canada / Inuktitut / $1000 / Developing the Inuit Film and Video Archive

Tingsheng Zhou / China / Tulihua / $995 Documentation

Akpobome Differe-Odiete / Nigeria / Okpe, Nigeria / $1000 / Printing of dictionary

Lana Takau / Australia / Nese, Malekula, Vanuatu / $747 / Early Childhood Language Immersion project

Fakhruddin Akhunzada / Pakistan / Dameli, Yidgha and Gawarbati, Pakistan / $1026 / Orthography workshop

Aliqavhar Bakhtovarshoev / Ukraine / Shughni, Gorno-Badakhshan AO, Tajikistan / $1000 / Publishing story-book

FEL Position Vacant: Web Editor

FEL seeks a Web Editor, to be responsible for content and maintenance of our site www.ogmios.org. This is not a paid post, as FEL is a charity, so we require commitment and dedication. In return we offer the help and support of a multidisciplinary team on the FEL committee. Items that need communicating to the outside world through our web-site include:

- Announcement of conferences;
- Reports of committee meetings;
- Funding opportunities;
- Applications for grants and announcement of the winning projects.

The Editor should be familiar with putting content on a web-site, including our Facebook page and social media. Please contact the editor of Ogmios for further information: chrmos50 at gmail.com

3. Endangered Languages in the News

Australia is the place of vanishing languages

By Chris Raja, from ABC ‘The Drum’ web-site, 19 November 2013

Recently, at the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney University’s Dr Michael Walsh made a significant discovery. In boxes of unpublished papers he unearthed a 125-page dictionary of two central Australian languages – Arrarnta and Luritja – compiled by German missionary Carl Strehlow.

Walsh has been working with Ronald Briggs, the Indigenous services librarian at the State Library, investigating the languages used among Indigenous Australians.

When I read a news report of Walsh’s find, I immediately told my Western Arrarnta friends. No-one in the community was aware of the discovery, but they all were in agreement that these important Western Arrarnta word lists should make their way back to central Australia. At the least, they would like to see the box and its contents.

The find got me thinking about my own culture, language and heritage. I was born in Calcutta and love to hear Bengali spoken. I am proud of filmmakers like Satyajit Ray, who made films in his own vernacular that the entire world grew to love. I appreciate the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore.

Due to various circumstances, I cannot speak or read Bengali and this disconnects me from the place of my birth. I dream I am in the arms of Kali attempting to cut the mother’s tongue out. Sure, I still know some Hindi, but that too is being erased from my memory with time and distance.

I wonder what my Australian children will make of my old country? Are we Australian forever now? Or, will they too one day like to learn the language and more of the culture of their father’s place of birth? Or will they choose to learn one of the many Indigenous languages that surround them in the Northern Territory?
I know I need to - and long to - celebrate more films, books, articles and plays in a variety of languages. Language defines a group of people. It is the voice of culture and heritage. Nothing is possible without language.

The definition of cultural heritage can vary. It can be physical - such as that contained in culturally-significant buildings, landscapes and artefacts - or intangible, contained in language, music, movies and customs, festivals, and food.

But it's not just old things, pretty things, or physical things. Cultural heritage involves strong human emotions. The role language, culture and heritage plays in a person's life and community cannot be underestimated. Culture is the basis of all social identity and development, and cultural heritage is the legacy that each generation receives and passes on. In a sense, it is what makes us human.

There are other considerations, such as what happens to a culture that is brought so low that its language is taken from it. Once you take away a nation's language, you take away its soul. Once language is lost, people are forced to think and see the world differently. They lose their mother tongue.

In the past, before colonisation, the First Australian languages and dialects were spoken. But later, even after 1960, children were punished for speaking their own languages in schools in various parts of Australia. Former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam introduced bilingual education in schools in Australia in December 1972. But in 2008, the NT Government announced that school programs were to be taught only in English for the first four hours of every school day. The policy was replaced with a new policy in 2012, which stated that home and local languages ‘can and should be used where appropriate to support the learning and acquisition of concepts.’

The Four Hours In English policy had disastrous consequences. Languages are in threat of dying out. Australia is the place of vanishing languages. The truth is that the West, and in particular the English language, has run over most other languages and cultures like a semitrailer truck. It has been nothing short of devastating.

Recognising, respecting and celebrating languages, diversity and cultural heritage is integral to healthy, harmonious relationships. Cultural heritage is not static. Culture and language changes over time and approaches need to be dynamic and adaptive. Effective cultural heritage management can have wide economic, social and environmental benefits.

So what place is there for Australian Indigenous languages? And should we care for languages that have a thousand or a hundred or so speakers left? Is it a terrible tragedy that most Aboriginal Australian languages are dead and will never be heard again? Is it okay that we are not terribly worried about that? How are we to ensure the vitality and the ongoing viability of the languages we still do have?

We need to create more content in Australian Indigenous languages. Encourage more language centres and active language speakers. Support the right people with administrative and technological help. By doing these things, we will be helping tourism, young rangers, health workers, teachers and students. Put simply, culture, language and heritage matter. The fact is schools in the Northern Territory where I live have, for the last ten years, overlooked the importance of Australian Indigenous languages and cross-generational learning.

I have witnessed first hand how little importance we have placed on Australian Indigenous languages even though bilingualism is a gift for us as a nation. The same could probably be said for the United States or Canada.

I wonder how many Indigenous language groups are known or could be named by the majority of Australians? I look forward to the day a prime minister of this country can speak one of the many Australian Indigenous languages. Now that would be something.

We need to celebrate the multilingual diversity of Australia, especially amongst its first people. Instead of devaluing the fact that this nation’s first people can speak several languages, can we respect two-way learning? Let’s cherish the wealth and wonder of people who still know these old, rare languages and stories that we have tried so hard to eradicate.

The endangered Osage language gets a Unicode-friendly alphabet

By Bryan Martucci, from The Line web-site, 15 January 2014

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

These nine simple words, written in this precise sequence, say nearly everything there is to be said about the Western world’s predominant orthography, Roman type. In it, all 26 of the English language’s letters make at least one appearance. Since Roman times, the languages of Europeans and their descendants have used them—and a handful of other characters, depending on the language and custom—to commit verbal utterances to writing.

Many of the more than 500 Native American languages that still exist in some form—since most pre-colonial languages weren’t written down, it’s impossible to know precisely how many there were before Europeans turned up in the New World—also use this predominant orthography. It’s not an ideal fit.

Latin, the language spoken by the Roman alphabet’s “inventors,” is also a direct predecessor of many of the languages that still employ it. By contrast, Native American languages have only the most tenuous connections to the Western world’s Indo-European language family. Most employ decidedly unfamiliar conventions of grammar, style, and form. The Language Geek, the alter-ego of a Canadian linguist named Michael Harvey, identifies a few Native tongues, like Nuu-chah-nulth, that lack any provision for capital letters; at least one, Vancouver Island’s SENCOTEN, is typically written in all caps.

The long colonial hangover hasn’t been good for these languages. Jessica Harjo, a recent graduate of the University of Minnesota’s Design MA program and a current PhD candidate, suspects that “the majority [of Native languages] are endangered.” Worse, she says, only “a small number” of Native American tribes “still have children who learn their Native language as their first language.”
An alphabet based on movement

Harjo is an Oklahoman of mixed Osage, Pawnee, Otoe, Sac, and Fox heritage. She wants to make it easier for Native American kids to learn their ancestors’ tongues in authentic fashion. Her U of M master’s thesis took the first step, sketching out a novel orthography for the Osage language.

The characters are a far cry from our A-to-Z alphabet—some are whimsical swirls, others resemble the human form. “The design truly encompasses the Osage culture in every curve, line, and bend,” she said in a recent interview with the U of M’s Discover Magazine. “Each symbol derives meaning from the basic forms of Osage arts [or] the movement that a…dancer exhibits.”

To complete the project, Harjo worked directly with Osage-language students and teachers in Oklahoma. Mapping a novel orthography onto an endangered language was a challenge, especially for a relative novice. “I took the beginners’ class when I lived in Oklahoma, so I know the basics,” she told me. “My maternal grandfather was a fluent Osage speaker…[his] was the last generation of fluent speakers who spoke and thought in Osage as their first language.”

Osage doesn’t exist in a vacuum. Like Spanish (Romance) and English (Germanic), it fits snugly into a family of closely related tongues known as the Dhegiha Sioux language group. Since members of this language group use similar sounds and constructions, Harjo’s orthography could easily commit them to writing as well.

Other languages would be trickier. “It may be possible for non-Siouan language groups to adapt the Osage orthography symbols,” says Harjo, “but their sounds are different, and more symbols would be required.”

Translating a new orthography into Unicode

Still, this might not be the last we hear of Jessica Harjo’s Osage orthography. Her recent acceptance into the U of M’s PhD program may give her more opportunities to refine the alphabet or create new ones. It could also give her the chance to transcribe the orthography into the Unicode digital language system, making it available to anyone with an Internet-connected computer—which would help the folks back home. Harjo designed her alphabet to be Unicode compatible.

Currently, Osage language students learn the language from an earlier form that isn’t compatible with Unicode. In the age of iPhones and Kindles, the students are still using paper and pencil. “The goal of my typeface was to design something that could be” translated into Unicode, says Harjo.

Digitally transcribing a language in Unicode takes time and resources, but Harjo—or a colleague—may get the chance sooner than anyone thought. In February, she’ll be meeting with a Unicode developer and the people in charge of the Osage language program to explore the feasibility of a potential project. It’ll be her job to convince her peers in Oklahoma that a carefully transcribed digital record is crucial to the language’s long-term survival.

Assuming the Osage elders agree, Harjo will face just one additional hurdle. “I am open to actively seeking funding” if the project moves ahead, she says. Even in the world of linguistics, money talks.

Island culture used binary in AD 1500

From the New Scientist, 21/28 December 2013

Polynesian islanders spoke the language of computers centuries before the first programmer was born. It seems that speakers on Mangareva Island used a hybrid of decimal and binary counting.

The binary system used by computers can represent any number via a string of 1s and 0s.

First you create a series of columns, each one devoted to a different power of 2, starting with 1 (which is 2⁰), followed by 2, 4, 8 and so on. You then put 1s in the columns needed to make up the target number and 0s in the rest.

Andrea Bender and Sieghard Beller of the University of Bergen, Norway studied the Mangarevan language, which dates back to AD 1500, or even earlier. As in the normal, decimal system, there are words for the numbers 1 through 9. After that, Mangarevans only had words for 10, 20, 40 and 80 – the binary powers multiplied by 10. So they used the binary system to count in 10s, but added 1 to 9 in the normal way.

Bender says the system may have come about because the islanders tallied items such as coconuts and octopuses in groups of 1, 2, 4 and 8.

Singer Ruth Keggin breathes new life into ancient language

By Mark Edwards, BBC News website, 15 February 2014

An Isle of Man singer is set to “breathe new life” into the ancient Manx language, once classified as “extinct” by cultural body UNESCO.

Ruth Keggin’s debut solo album features new arrangements of traditional and contemporary folk songs, most of which are sung in the Gaelic language.

The 25-year-old said: “Manx never died out - the language revival started decades ago.”

There are currently around 1,700 Manx speakers on the Isle of Man.

In 2009, United Nations cultural body UNESCO was forced to change its classification of the language from “extinct” following protests from islanders.

Several letters were sent from children at the island’s Bunscoill (Manx language school) in St Johns, which has taught all lessons in the Isle of Man’s native tongue since 2001.

The children wrote: “If our language is extinct then what language are we writing in?”

‘Vibrant and alive’

Bunscoill head teacher Julie Matthews said: “The Isle of Man language is having something of a renaissance.” Currently 71 children attend the school.
The language itself has similarities with the Gaelic tongues spoken in the island's neighbours, Ireland and Scotland.

Mrs Matthews said: "It is going from strength to strength and having young and exciting musicians like Ruth can only help to inspire future generations.

"We want to make Manx relevant in the future, not something we are simply preserving from the past.

"A great deal has been done over the past 30 years to resurrect the language and Ruth's music is certainly going to help keep it vibrant and alive."

'Manx never died'

The singer began work on the album, funded by Culture Vannin, in November 2012.

She said: "There is such an international interest in the language these days! It's hoped I can be a small part of that and share these songs with people around the world."

"I'm hoping the music goes down well and people like the songs. Generally, I think there is a very positive attitude towards Manx music," she added.

Culture Vannin's Manx language officer Adrian Caine said: "This is a modern interpretation by an extremely talented singer which can do nothing but good for the language.

"She is breathing new life into the language with her music," he said.

The Port Erin singer will launch her album by singing tracks at the Centenary Centre in Peel on Saturday [15 February].

BBC Radio 3 broadcaster Mary Ann Kennedy recently described her as "the pure and passionate Gaelic voice of the Manx music renaissance".

The Scottish musician said: "Ruth is a real talent and her music will unquestionably help what is a fragile language. It is very special.

"I have been following the Manx music scene for a number of years and there is a new generation taking it forward."

"The music is being played but until now the language was not necessarily attached. This could be a real breakthrough."

Following her island concert she will perform at three gigs in Dublin, Belfast and Donegal.

Unrequited love, betrayal, greed — and Mayan: soap opera the first in indigenous language


Tihosuco, Mexico: It might be the cleanest Mexican soap opera around.

The passionate love scenes that are a staple of the genre were reduced, bowing to conservative local sensibilities, to a few pecks on the cheek and hand-holding as innocent as junior high schoolers on a first date.

Nunavut, Canada: Launch of Uqausirmut Quviasuutiqarniq 2014

From the Government of Nunavut web-site, 17 February 2014

IQALUIT, Nunavut (February 17, 2014) – New online, print and multimedia materials are now available in recognition of the Uqausirmut Quviasuutiqarniq, which means “celebration of our language”. The theme of this year’s event, held February 17 to 28 by the Department of Culture and Heritage, is “Our language keeps our culture strong”. Uqausirmut Quviasuutiqarniq is Nunavut’s two-week celebration of Inuktitut, which is a traditional, single term to refer to both Inuinnaqtun and Inuktitut together.

“Inuktitut has a strong foundation, but we cannot afford to be complacent”, said the Honourable Paul Okalik, Minister of Languages. “The small choices we make every day will keep our language and culture strong. I urge Nunavummiut to use Inuktitut at home, school, and work – in all areas of life, whether during cultural activities or chatting with friends online.”

For this year’s celebrations, the Department of Culture and Heritage is releasing:

• Iglarnaqtut – an illustrated collection of funny original stories (online and print);
• Timiup Kisukuttimaangit Taiguusinguin/Timimi Kituuyaakhait Taidjutait – a full-colour resource for health professionals and medical interpreters on human anatomy in Inuktitut (online and print) and
• Inuktitut books, games, birthday songs CDs, and flashcards to schools and community libraries across Nunavut.

The department encourages other organisations to join in the action and welcomes Nunavummiut to share photos of their activities on Uqausirn nut Quviasuutiqarniq 2014 web pages to uqausivut at gov.nu.ca.
It was not the only accommodation made by producers of what is considered the first “telenovela”, as soap operas are known here, entirely in an indigenous language, Maya, and with a story line rooted in the community.

For starters, Maria, the love interest, cannot bring herself to say “I am falling in love with you” when her beau-to-be, Jacinto, finally gets his act together. Because while phrases of desire like “I love you” are roughly translatable into Maya, it is trickier to express being “in love” in the language.

“It’s more like ‘the heart of my heart is happy’”, said Hilario Chi Canul, a professor of Mayan language and culture. He helped write the script and also plays the leading man in the telenovela, called Baktun, which makes its debut this month on Quintana Roo state public television.

It has standard ingredients of the form: greed, betrayal, family squabbles, unrequited love and acting that would probably not get the attention of the Emmy academy.

But Baktun is as much a cultural journey as one of the heart, using a contemporary story line that blends Mayan ceremonies and beliefs with the tale of a young man who emigrates to New York City to work, distances himself from family and community – even becoming rusty in his language – and eventually returns and learns the value of preserving the community and not forgetting his roots. Or his childhood sweetheart, who has taken an interest in his brother.

Baktun refers to a megacycle of the Mayan Long Count calender and was deliberately chosen as the title in light of the attention it received last December, when widespread misinterpretations fanned on the Internet led people to claim that the end of the world was nigh. In reality, one cycle ended and another began.

In the telenovela’s case, the cycle is a metaphor for life’s ever-changing chapters.

“We wanted to show you could still be proudly Mayan even in this modern world with mass media and digital communication,” said Bruno Cárcamo, the veteran film and television producer who made the show and previously oversaw a documentary on fading indigenous languages in Mexico. “Telenovelas are popular in the Mayan communities, too, but they are not presented in their language or their reality.”

The series, in 21 episodes and also packaged as a movie that will be shown at film festivals, was shot in this remote, historic village in Quintana Roo state, 225 kilometres southwest of Cancún and famed for a church left damaged from a 19th-century Mayan uprising.

Most members of the cast are residents of the town with little or no acting experience, smitten a bit with the star turn. On a recent evening, Cárcamo showed some episodes of the drama, as well as the full movie, in an open-air meeting hall before rapt audience members who stayed glued to their seats even when technical problems interrupted the showing.

“We should never forget our origins,” said Maria Elena Tuz Kuvil, 40, who sat leaning forward for nearly the entire screening. “I could not believe it was in our language. I watch a lot of telenovelas, but none like this.”

Many people said the cycle of loss and gain resonated with them, as dozens of young people have left to work in nearby beach resort hotels or in the United States. Fewer parents seem to be teaching their children Maya, though Cárcamo estimated that 80 per cent of the village speaks it as a first language. During the filming, in fact, he often needed an interpreter to get his point across.

“Parents often say, ‘Learn Maya for what?’ It’s better to speak English,” said José Manuel Poot Cahun, 26, who plays the role of the scheming brother and grew up speaking both Maya and Spanish. “But many of my friends are wondering why they didn’t learn Maya as children.”

Entertainment offerings in Maya are sparse. There are occasional documentaries and Hollywood movies dubbed in Maya. The 2006 Mel Gibson movie Apocalypto, set during the decline of the Mayan empire, was almost entirely in Maya, with Chi Canul serving as a linguist on the production. It was criticized for focusing on the civilization’s violent practices, and Chi Canul today calls it “exaggerated, not history but Hollywood”.

A full-length telenovela, or any television drama for that matter, set in the Mayan world in Maya is unique, experts on Mexican soap operas said.

“It’s very important that indigenous people are able to tell stories of their reality, not only in documentaries but in fictional formats,” said Adrien J. Charlois, a communications professor at the University of Guadalajara, who studies telenovela history. “This allows them to see themselves as habitants of the full media panorama, while making it possible to generate new ways of defining themselves.”

Still, Cárcamo and Chi Canul had to win the support of community elders, who were sceptical of outsiders but eventually were convinced by the idea of a Mayan story told by Mayans.

Vital signs for Aboriginal languages

From The Conversation web-site (Australia), 6 April 2014

Attitudes and policies relating to Australian Indigenous languages are in a state of flux. The Northern Territory (NT) government is reportedly again aiming to banish Aboriginal languages from the classroom.

But there’s good news too: the Australian Research Council has approved a second round of funding for the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages, which is being launched today in Darwin. The Living Archive is a digital collection of materials in Australian Indigenous languages from around the Northern Territory. Most of the current collection was produced by Literature Production Centres at schools with bilingual programs over several decades from 1973.

The beautifully illustrated books include stories of creation, contact history, traditional practices, cautionary tales, humorous incidents in daily life, environmental knowledge, bush medicine, pedagogical readers, and many other genres. They contain fine examples of people transforming high oral literature into written literature.

With the demise of bilingual education, the books faced an uncertain future. In some cases they had been carefully catalogued
and stored in the schools; in others they were carelessly thrown into dusty storerooms. In the worst cases, boxes of books had already been destroyed.

Visits to the communities by project staff involved sorting through piles of dusty books, identifying the best copies for scanning, and talking with community members about the project.

Each contributor (author, illustrator, translator, etc.) named in a book was sought out (or family members of those who had passed away) and invited to give permission for their materials to be digitised and uploaded to a public website. Most people were pleased to see these resources being valued and given a new life in the digital environment.

The second stage, now underway with additional partners, aims to expand the collection beyond its bilingual education origins to uncover other texts in endangered NT languages, as well as engaging community members, academics and schools in using and enhancing the collection.

Designed in part as academic research infrastructure, the Living Archive’s overarching aim is the mobilisation of language work intergenerationally and interculturally. It will reach schools, remote communities, and beyond – and reopen questions about the role of Australian languages in our wider collective Australian life.

Access to online vernacular language materials is becoming easier – and the Living Archive will be a valuable addition to resources for educators. The Australian Curriculum framework explicitly encourages the use of such materials in educational settings.

In spite of this, the latest report to the NT government recommends an English-only approach in bush schools. This flies in the face of research pointing to the effectiveness of planned and informed use of home language and English in the classroom in developing listening, speaking, reading and writing of both home language and English.

While waiting for the next policy decision, community-level support for vernacular languages in schools continues.

The policies that oppose giving home languages a central place in the education of young speakers look like a reaction to top-down pressure to improve the English literacy and numeracy results of young children in very remote Aboriginal communities on the national testing regime (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, also known as NAPLAN).

Accelerating the development of these competencies seems to trump the benefits of mother-tongue education every time. But at what cost?

The launch of the Living Archive, with its focus on collaborations between researchers and language owners, sheds light on the efforts being undertaken in many places to keep languages alive for future generations.

The archive helps us understand how these languages reflect and produce a uniquely Australian knowledge of our history, our place, our relation to the land, our understanding of environments and seasons, the work for example of fire ecology, and our health in body and spirit. English has not evolved to make and do Australian life in the way Australian languages have.

As more and more obscure texts in endangered languages are identified and uploaded to the archive, people in Australia and beyond can continue to engage with this rich cultural heritage.

Malaysia: Sarawak organisation pledges to preserve endangered languages

From The Borneo Post (www.theborneopost.com) web edition, 2 April 2014

KUCHING: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) Sarawak will give priority to endangered ethnic languages in their Sarawak Local Wisdom Research and Publication Package project.

The RM125,690 project aims to document and preserve ethnic Sarawakian languages for the coming generations and to establish Sarawak as a national reference hub for language, literature and culture. Apart from adding to the availability of quality publications, DBP hopes to eventually gain recognition from Unesco for preservation and conservation of indigenous treasures, said Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) Sarawak deputy director Aminah Awg Basar.

She was speaking at a press conference yesterday after witnessing Women, Welfare and Family Development Minister Datuk Fatimah Abdullah hand over a grant worth RM215,680 to DBP Sarawak deputy director of Language and Literature Development Dr Hazami Jahari.

Fatimah said documentation is important as there is a risk that these languages and culture die out.

“We don’t want to lose the language,” she said, adding that Unesco considered this an important aspect by helping the Bidayuh community at Kampung Bunuk and Kelabit community in Bario preserve their languages under the ‘Endangered Languages’ programme.

The programme entails that preschools are conducted in the native languages by trained teachers.

Meanwhile, RM90,000 of the grant money will go into organising the 2014 Sarawak National Literary Award, which Hazami hoped would be awarded to a Sarawakian.

The prestigious award was given to the late Muhamad Bujang (popularly known as Melati Sarawak) in 1994, and the late Muhammad Rakawi Yusuf in 1995. After a 14-year lapse, it was presented to Datu Dr Adi Radozaman Tuah, director of Education Bureau Services of the Sarawak Islamic Council.

DBP Sarawak assistant director Shantrol Abdullah was among those at the press conference.

Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) to document 500 endangered languages


The Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) will document 500 endangered languages in the next few years.


The institute has identified 500 endangered languages which are at high risk of extinction by 2020. The institute will work in collaboration with language communities, archive and archive owners to document the languages.

The project will be implemented in the form of local projects in 300-400 places in all the states in India. The institute will provide the necessary training to the local people to document the languages.

The institute has already completed the first phase of the project and will implement the second phase in the next few months. The institute will also work with language communities to digitise and preserve the endangered languages.

Professor V Raman, director, said the institute aims to document the endangered languages and make them available to the general public.

The institute will also work with the government to include the endangered languages in the school curriculum.

The institute has already documented 200 languages and will use the latest technology to digitise and preserve the languages.

The institute has also started a website ‘India’s Language Database’ which will be launched soon. The website will provide information about the endangered languages.

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The Central Institute of Indian Languages here will embark on a mega project to document nearly 500 endangered languages in the country, each spoken by fewer than 10,000 people.

It has been approved in principle by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The CIIL will collaborate with universities and institutes.

Speaking to The Hindu on the sidelines of a two-day workshop on ‘Endangered tribal languages in south India’, organised by the Anthropological Society of India and the CIIL, L. Ramamoorthy, Head, Linguistic Data Consortium for Indian Languages, CIIL, said on Monday that the work would be taken up under a scheme to preserve and protect endangered languages.

The objective is to bring out dictionaries and also document and preserve the ethnic knowledge system enshrined in the languages, including folklore. It also intends to frame grammar rules. Experts would give suggestions for the revitalisation of these languages.

About 70 languages from different parts of the country would be studied in the first phase and 500 would be taken up in a span of 10 years, Mr. Ramamoorthy said. The study and documentation of each language would cost between Rs. 6 lakh and Rs. 8 lakh, he added.

Earlier, Dr. Ramamoorthy spoke on ‘Endangered tribal languages – initiatives from the CIIL’. Referring to the above project, he said there was no consensus on the status of endangered languages. While the Census of India 2001 pegged the number at 122, the Anthropological Survey of India put it at 323, while a UNESCO report said 196 Indian languages were endangered. He hoped the workshop would come out with tools and parameters to identify an endangered language.

Lawrence Surendra, Senior Fellow, Indian Council of Social Science Research, delivered a special lecture on endangered tribal languages and cultures and pointed out that endangerment of language was far more serious than that of culture because with the extinction of language, the entire encyclopaedia of knowledge enshrined in that language would be lost forever.

P.K. Misra, president, Anthropological Association, Mysore, inaugurated the workshop and said the status of language should be understood in the context of society and culture which were not static but under constant change. Citing the example of Jenu Kuruba community, Prof. Misra said changing external environmental factors had affected the traditional lifestyle of the tribal people.

C.R. Satyanarayana, deputy director and head, ASI Southern Regional Centre, subject experts from different universities and institutions are attending the workshop.

The amazing endangered languages of Russia


At the opening ceremony on Feb. 7 for the Sochi Winter Olympics, Russia’s self-portrait in pageant form included trippy floating onion domes, dead-eyed stuffed bears, singing policemen, and monumental disembodied heads. But it also included a brief look at Russia’s many ethnic minorities: a Disney-ish parade of men and women in traditional garb, holding hands in a circle. According to the New Republic, the Russian announcer boasted of “180 nations, each with their own culture and language.”

What the announcer didn’t mention is that many of those languages are under serious threat. UNESCO’s 2010 Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger lists more than 130 Russian languages, placing an overwhelming portion of the country’s minority languages at least in the “vulnerable” category. The North Caucasus region near Sochi is a particularly dramatic example both of linguistic diversity—more than 40 languages are still spoken there—and language endangerment. In fact, Ubykh, the language that gave Sochi its name (it derives from an Ubykh word for “seaside”), is now extinct, mostly wiped out when the Russians brutally subdued the region in the 19th century.

Today, linguists say, the Putin regime’s inattention to non-Russian languages could be a less dramatic but no less sure path to widespread language loss. Despite Russia’s lip-service to diversity in Sochi, its actual languages are being gradually starved out.

In the North Caucasus alone, the languages spoken by ethnic minorities represent a confounding diversity of human knowledge. Two major language families appear here and nowhere else in the world—the Northwest Caucasian languages, including the Circassian languages, like Kabardian, and Ubykh; and the Northeast Caucasian languages, including Chechen, Ingush, and many Dagestani languages. All the Caucasian languages are highly complex in grammar and syntax, with up to 81 consonants, sounds articulated in many different parts of the mouth (the Dagestani languages use 11 parts of the mouth as opposed to the usual five), and widely varied case systems, according to McMaster University linguist John, who has been studying them since the ‘60s.

“What’s so strange about the Caucasus is it violates what we think of ‘areal linguistics,’” Colarusso said, referring to the way neighboring languages, even if they’re not related historically, often develop similar attributes over time. While the other languages in the region—of Semitic, Turkic, and Indo-European origin—have tended to adopt elements of Caucasian languages, the Caucasian languages themselves remain stubbornly unique. This reflects, Colarusso thinks, a fierce and embattled sense of ethnic pride: “Language serves as a very clear badge of identity. And they have to adopt some badge of identity to live.”

Sochi itself was once the home of several different languages, including Circassian, Ubykh, and Abkhaz, until Russia ethnically cleansed much of the local population and deported the rest to Turkey between 1860 and 1864. Circassian languages and dialects are still spoken in Russia and in diaspora communities in Turkey, the Middle East, and America. But Ubykh was declared extinct in 1992, although Colarusso says there are still some old Turkish villagers who speak it.

Language rights have been bitterly political in Russia as far back as the medieval czars, who developed a Russification policy meant to standardize culture, religion, and language across their vast territories. After the Revolution, the Soviets at first
out of the economy—but much of it suggests political expediency and a basic disregard for small language groups. “If you look at the thrust of Putin’s policies, they are leading to significant cuts in the amount of money available for a lot of the smaller languages, and some of those are going to die as a result,” says Paul Goble, a Eurasia specialist and former State Department adviser.

While not as fragile as the languages of Siberia, many of the Caucasian languages have dwindling numbers of native speakers—tiny pockets up in the Dagestani hills speaking Archi (about 1,000 speakers, according to UNESCO), Hunzib (1,839), or Tindi (about 6,000). Others are larger in number, like Kabardian or Chechen, but are threatened either by the dominance of Russia in the public sphere or by security and economic issues. “It’s as bad as it’s ever been in [the North Caucasus],” says Victor Friedman, a Slavic language specialist at the University of Chicago who travels regularly to Dagestan.

And yet the linguists I spoke to described a palpable energy among young people when it comes to language preservation, especially online. “The old people say, I’ll just go on with my life, run the tailor shop or be the pharmacist or whatever,” Colarusso said. “But...the young people...want to retain it in some form.” The Sochi Olympics, although they may have glossed over painful history, could even galvanize revitalization, he said. For the moment, however, any efforts on that front—like a recent movement to resurrect Ubykh, the lost language of Sochi—seem to be in the hands of the Caucasians themselves, without support from Moscow.

Nigeria: A case for endangered indigenous languages


No doubt, English Language is a unifying language in most Commonwealth countries especially Nigeria where over 500 indigenous languages are spoken. But the pace at which these indigenous languages are losing out to the English language is alarming. Even, the three major indigenous languages of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, are not spared.

A recent UNESCO research shows that on the average, 25 percent of children below 11 years are unable to speak their parents’ indigenous language in Nigeria, and if the trend is not checked, the research notes that Nigerian languages will be in extinction in two to three generations, that is in 50 to 75 years time. Similar alert on the impending extinction of Nigerian languages emerged from this year’s UNESCO International Mother Language Day Celebration in Abuja, when Prof. Chinnyere Ohiri-Aniche, president, Linguistic Association of Nigeria (LAN) warned that about 400 indigenous languages are likely going into extinction. Of the major Nigerian languages, it appears that Yoruba and Hausa are making efforts at sustaining their relevance, while the Igbo Language seems worst hit as increasingly young ones prefer English to their mother tongue. This sad reality was evident at the two editions of the Africa Magic Viewers’ Choice Award where Hausa and Yoruba film producers, actors and actresses were rewarded for their works.
The reason for the absence of Igbo, Efik and other indigenous language categories in the awards, according to Biola Alabi, managing director, M-Net Africa, was that the categories are yet to produce enough movies that will sustain viewership on African Magic channels. It is so because, increasingly fewer youths speak the languages and the trend keeps going down every year leaving the languages more endangered.

Experts believe that the growing extinction of indigenous languages in the country is largely as result of total and unselective westernization and the poor attitude of the now ubiquitous private Primary and Secondary schools to indigenous languages.

Reacting to this growing disdain or neglect of indigenous languages, a commentator notes that “I was mad when my cousin whose children attend an expensive private school asked me not to force his children to speak Yoruba on the ground that he did not pay all that money for them to speak Yoruba. You think those children will ever be proud speaking that language especially if they travel out for their university education”.

The only way to save Nigeria’s indigenous languages from being extinct is to promote, teach and speak these languages at home and at schools and make the young ones know that these indigenous languages are not inferior to English, French or German, and that they are importantly symbols of Nigerian identity.

The Federal and State’s Ministry of Education should come out with curriculum policies on these indigenous languages requiring every school, public or private to teach indigenous languages and not treat them as inferior.

Every society or culture is preserved through its languages as these convey thoughts, values and mores of these societies. If Nigerians would continue to hold their heads high amongst other peoples of the globe, they have to preserve their true identities. If Indians, Chinese, Japanese don’t throw away their identities in the course of development or relating with the West, then why should Nigerians jettison their own identities?

It is noteworthy that Development is not Westernisation. It is notworthy that Development is not Westernisation.

**Dikranagerd-Armenian Dialect Dictionary**

*From The Armenian Weekly, 9 December 2013*

Teaneck, N.J.—After years of compilation, a new dictionary of words and expressions from the Dikranagerd-Armenian dialect is now available. Titled, “Inch g’usis”: A Dikranagerdtsi Vernacular Handbook,” the term “Inch g’usis” literally means “What do you say?” in the dialect of Dikranagerd.

Authored by Charles Kasbarian, “Inch g’usis”: A Dikranagerdtsi Vernacular Handbook showcases the earthy and humorous dialect of Dikranagerd, presented in English transliteration. Kasbarian is also known as “C.K. Garabed,” the columnist behind “Uncle Garabed’s Notebook,” which has appeared in The Armenian Weekly for almost 25 years.

No one knows how many Armenian Genocide survivors were integrated into Turkish society, nor how many native Armenians may remain, though hidden away. In either case, there are few, if any Armenians in the Diarbekr region of Western Armenia (present-day Turkey) who still speak the native dialect. As a result, it is likely that the dialect of Dikranagerd will become extinct in our lifetime. Aside from this obvious fact, Kasbarian explained his reasoning for creating “Inch g’usis?”: “The Dikranagerd dialect is my native language. In my childhood, while trying to converse with non-Dikranagerdtsi Armenians, I would get laughed at for what they perceived to be a queer way of speaking. But in my maturity, I realized that there was a lot to be said for dialects – the one of Dikranagerd in particular.”

As such, Kasbarian took on the task of trying, in some small way, to document elements of the Dikranagerd dialect for posterity. And so, he began to note Dikranagerdtsi words and phrases, which grew into the present collection. “And far from being laughed at,” Kasbarian continued, “linguistic scholars have consulted me on the virtues of the dialect which they feel is worthy of preservation.”

4. Appeals, News & Views from Endangered Communities

**Nigeria: Local languages fight for survival**

*From the BBC Monitoring ‘News from Elsewhere’ web-site*

Dozens of local languages in Nigeria are under threat because of neglect and outside influences, it’s been reported.

Of Nigeria’s 529 official languages, 62 are “in trouble” or “dying”, the Lagos-based Guardian newspaper reports. Up to 200 Nigerian languages may be at risk in the future, the paper says.

Nigeria is one of the most linguistically diverse countries on earth, says Kole Omotoso, a professor at Adekunle Ajasin University. But many children don’t learn their mother-tongues, so languages need to be protected and more widely taught in order to survive. “Nigerian languages remain very poorly researched compared with indigenous languages in Europe, the Americas and Australia,” he adds.

Nigeria is dominated by three major languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, with English also used to maintain the country’s unity amid a diverse cultural mix. Linguistics expert Samuel Aje notes that language also “defines the customs and traditions of the people... and its neglect has contributed to the struggle being faced by many African countries.”

Officials have proposed caps on international TV and radio programmes, saying unlimited foreign coverage would “take its toll on our local languages, where people will no more be proud of what is Nigerian,” the head of one national cultural group told the paper.

Endangered minority languages are not just a Nigerian problem. UNESCO says half the world’s 6,000 languages could disappear by the end of the century unless steps are taken to preserve and encourage their use.
To make the work widely accessible, Kasbarian decided to put the handbook online. The work can be freely accessed on Kasbarian’s Armeniapedia page:

http://www.armeniapedia.org/wiki/Dikranagerdtsi_Vernacular_Handbook_In_English_Transliteration

Included are words and terms “A” through “Z”, a section on Dikranagerdtsi nicknames, and an Armenian alphabet mnemonic. Arranged alphabetically and containing a pronunciation key, the handbook offers many colorful phrases, interjections and exclamations such "Kher eghnah" (“May it be useful or good,” often said when somebody sneezes); “Leghin badri” (“May his gall bladder burst,” meaning “May he drop dead.”); “Jivit godreh, doun nusdi” (“Break your leg, stay at home,” meaning “Stop gadding about.”); and “Kna kni” (“Go to sleep,” meaning “Get out of here.”). Parents of young children are cautioned that there are many ribald entries.

Kasbarian grew up, during the Great Depression, in Union City, New Jersey — which was once heavily populated by Dikranagerdtsi Armenians. Over the years, he has presented folk tales and skits in the Dikranagerdtsi dialect at cultural evenings held in the New Jersey area. Also in progress on his Armeniapedia page are his The Dikranagerd Mystique Armenian Cookbook; a number of articles about growing up Dikranagerdtsi; Oyin Mi Tavli, a one-act play in the Dikranagerd dialect; and The Dictionary of Armenian Surnames.

Says Kasbarian of “Inch g’usis?”, “like everything else, there are bound to be missing words and phrases and even mistakes, in which case readers should feel free to bring them to the attention of the author.” Kasbarian can be reached at: ckgarabed at aol.com.

5. Language Technology

Social media rescue dying Indian languages

By Bijoyeta Das, from Al Jazeera web-site, 7 January 2014

In the language of the Bhatu Kolhati, a remote nomadic tribe in India’s western Maharashtra state, tatti means tea and gulle is meat. But, Kuldeep Musale, 30, who belongs to this tribe barely remembers his mother tongue. Well educated and having studied in boarding schools since he was six, Musale instead uses the dominant languages – Hindi, Marathi and English.

His ancestors were traditional folk artists and dancers, but not Musale. He works like any other professional in Pune city, 150km from the provincial capital, Mumbai.

"When you don’t hear a language you forget," he says.

The mobile phone is a blessing as that enables him to communicate with his parents who still live in his ancestral village. This has helped him keep in touch with his mother tongue. Not just that, Musale is consciously relearning his language which is on the endangered list. Whenever he goes home on vacation, he makes it a point to record songs and voices of elders on his smart phone.

Linguists say these are exciting times as technology promises to resurrect dying languages. At the very least, digital tools can help store the languages in archives. This has already started showing results.

"India today is showing a remarkable phenomenon of growth in non-protected and minority languages," says Ganesh Devy, chair of the People’s Linguistic Survey of India.

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"India today is showing a remarkable phenomenon of growth in non-protected and minority languages," says Ganesh Devy, chair of the People’s Linguistic Survey of India.
“Earlier villagers thought that access to modernity was only through another language. But now because of technology they can be in their own area and still feel that they are connected to modern life without having to migrate out of their language zones,” says Devy.

Camcorders, digital cameras and recorders have long replaced notebooks and cassettes of linguists. They are also often used by the local communities themselves. This has galvanised documentation.

India’s mobile and internet outreach has opened up the possibility of harnessing digital tools - such as social media, mobile apps, interactive games, online dictionaries, and open source software: even Facebook and Google which are increasingly being used by indigenous communities in other countries.

Mapping Indian languages

India speaks 780 languages, but the official number is 122, while 220 languages have disappeared in the last 50 years, says Devy, who has mapped all languages spoken in India. With 197 endangered languages, India tops the list of UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger.

Devy compares India to Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Nigeria as the demography and language density are similar. But, India is managing to resurrect its dying languages.

For example: Bhilli has shown an 85 percent growth in two decades. Khasi, Garo, Koya, Tripuri all show a rise in speaker base. Printing had wiped out many oral traditions. But “simple, affordable, popular tools” such as mobile, radio, and videos support these languages. Livelihood opportunities in language zones and multilingual education in tribal languages will ensure survival, Devy adds.

For Machung Lalung, 28, his mother tongue Tiwa is synonymous with muddy roads and earthen lamps of his village in Karbi Anglong in the northeastern state of Assam. “Knowing English and Hindi meant you are smart, you have a future,” he says. So, as a teenager he moved to Delhi to work at a call centre.

“Now when I watch music videos on YouTube and text my friends by typing out Tiwa words in English, I feel nostalgic not awkward,” he says with a smile.

Technology boom holds promise

Communities abandon languages when they internalise the negative values connected to their identities, says Greg Anderson, director of the Living Tongue Institute. “Language endangerment is almost always the result of discrimination and bias.”

Technology levels the playing field, he says. “But there is no quick fix,” he cautions.

India is on the verge of an Internet boom according to a 2012 McKinsey & Company report. About 120 million users make it the third largest Internet population globally. By 2015, India will scale to second position with at least 320 million users. This has been buoyed by decrease in the cost of Internet access and mobile devices. Indians, ironically, have access to more cell phones than toilets, with 867.80 million users of the mobile.

Anderson and K David Harrison launched eight online talking dictionaries as part of the Enduring Voices Institute by National Geographic Society and Living Tongue Institute. These dictionaries contain more than 32,000 word entries, and include Ho and Remo of India.

A similar dictionary for Koro Aka, spoken in Arunachal Pradesh, is being created. This language was previously unrecognised by science and the Indian census.

“The Koro are a community that is embracing technology and carrying their language forward across the digital divide, to help it survive, while keeping many of their traditional values and knowledge base,” Harrison says. Now the speakers are sharing videos on YouTube about medicinal plants, beads and myths.

The Google Endangered Languages Project plans to digitally archive 3,000 languages.

Transformative social media

Digital tools allow people to use their language creatively, and can be potentially used in India, according to Kevin Scannell, researcher of computational linguistics at St Louis University.

“If all of the content that young people are exposed to on Facebook and Twitter is in English or another major language, it reinforces the idea that these big languages are the language of technology and the computer,” he says.

Bucking the trend, his website Indigenous Tweets tracks 61,909 users tweeting in 153 languages, of which 79 are endangered including six spoken in India - Khari, Lushai, Karbi, Mara Chin, Thado Chin, and Tulu.

Scannell explains how social media is resurrecting dying languages- it unites small and scattered language communities and provides way for learners to converse directly with fluent native speakers. Social media is mostly written while most indigenous languages are oral traditions. But sites such as SpeakTalk-Chat focuses on group and video chats in endangered languages.

Indigenous language-learning mobile apps are fashionable. “Really transformative is the First Voices Chat app: Basically, it just provides good keyboards so people can type in their language on a mobile device,” he says.

Language groups are sharing resources, such as software toolkits. Darrick Baxter developed an iOS app for Ojibwe language and the source code is freely available. This enables other groups to create similar apps without starting from scratch.

Facebook's translation app allows volunteers to use it in about 100 languages. Language groups can also use the script Gresemoney and translate into any language without Facebook’s approval.

Tools boost survival. But as Scannell says, “When you boil it all down, to save a language the most important thing is for people to have babies, love them, and speak their language to them.”
Romansh digitisation project breaks new ground

By Julia Slater, from swissinfo.ch web-site, 23 February 2014

Records of witch trials, memoirs of mercenaries and personal letters up to 450 years old have recently made their way from the library shelf to the computer thanks to a pioneering digitisation project with potential far beyond Switzerland.

They are all to be found in the Rätoromanische Chrestomathie, regarded as a mine of information for historians and linguists.

A collection of texts written between about 1560 and 1910 in all the varieties of Romansh, Switzerland’s fourth national language, it was published around the turn of the 20th century.

A facsimile version in 15 volumes came out in the 1980s. But valuable though it is, it has never been particularly easy to work with.

Now, thanks to specially developed software and a huge amount of goodwill by volunteers, it is available to anyone who wants to consult it, and in a much more user-friendly form.

The project was the brainchild of Professor Jürgen Rolshoven, a computational linguist in the Department of Linguistic Data Processing at the University of Cologne in Germany, and Wolfgang Schmitz, head of the Cologne University Library.

Rolshoven explained to swissinfo.ch that he had started off his academic career as a philologist with a special interest in Romance – or Latin-based – minority languages, including Romansh, so had personal reasons for wanting to digitise the work.

And with his enthusiasms, he is the perfect bridge. “Often people working in that domain don’t like computers, and often people working with computers don’t like minority languages,” he laughed.

Digitising old texts is not new, but – as anyone who has tried to read them on the computer will know – the end version is often full of mistakes. It is normally a two-stage procedure: first the original printed text is scanned to produce a photographic copy, which is then converted by the process of optical character recognition, or OCR, into computer-readable text.

Community involvement

Rolshoven’s department went one step further: it developed a web-based system in which the OCR version can be compared with the scanned version. This system enables collaborators to add corrections, commentaries and cross-references.

“This was important, because there are about 8,000 pages, and one person can’t do all the work. On the one hand it was necessary to distribute it, and on the other hand people should check one another,” he explained.

“This is a pioneering work,” said Florentin Lutz, a Romansh-speaking linguist based in Bern, who helped Rolshoven with contacts, knowledge and fundraising in Switzerland. “It’s the first time that ordinary people have been brought in to help.”

These correctors are all volunteers. Without community involvement the project couldn’t have succeeded. The bulk of the funding that Rolshoven and Lutz have been able to raise is needed to pay for the software developers at the university.

About 150 people from all over the world – most of them Romansh speakers - registered to help with the correction. Not all of them ended up doing so and some made only a few contributions. The bulk of the work ended up being done by quite a small group, dominated by one man: Michele Badilatti, who comes from the Engadine, and is a student at the University of Zurich. He told swissinfo.ch that he wouldn’t like to think how many hours he had put in.

Nevertheless, for him the fact that the group ended up being quite small had advantages.

“What I noticed as I worked was that when there are not so many collaborators, it’s easier to achieve consistency,” he told swissinfo.ch.

To err is human

Badilatti admits that it could sometimes be “mega-dull”. “All the religious stuff – which is actually most of it: for us today it’s just awful to read. But at least linguistically they were interesting.”

“And then there were lots of very fascinating things – the ones I probably liked best were accounts written by mercenaries.”

It wasn’t only the OCR version that contained mistakes. Caspar Decurtins, the original compiler at the turn of the century, transcribed many of the texts from manuscripts. As a speaker of the Sursilvan variant of Romansh, he sometimes made errors in other variants. And the printed version was typeset in Germany, by printers who didn’t know the language at all.

The correctors decided to leave most of these errors, rather than to take a subjective decision as to what was right. They only corrected systematic errors, such as when the German-speaking printers had muddled ‘n’ with ‘u’ – one being the upside-down version of the other. Who benefits?

A huge amount of effort has gone into the project, but what’s in it, and for whom?

The developers don’t have any specific figures about the number of users, but Lutz is in no doubt that it has lots of advantages.

“You can find and download lots of texts very quickly, and you can find answers in them to all sorts of questions. Perhaps you want information about superstitions, or you’re looking for old recipes. Someone was interested in different words for ‘butterfly’ for a radio programme. It’s all very easy with our search function, which we are still expanding.”

Rolshoven also appreciates it from quite a different angle.

“It’s useful for my students, who are learning how to write specialised software. And we also learned that it is indeed possible to find a community and to integrate them to do all these jobs.”

Of course the experience is not tied to any particular language or area.

“We might try to collaborate with the Africanists at Cologne University, for example. There’s a great demand for doing this for languages where the books are only in the libraries of Paris...
or London, not in the countries where the languages are spoken,” he suggested.

And there are plans to create a digital Romansh library, if funding can be found. In some cases there are copyright issues, but literature in minority languages faces a problem that doesn’t apply to larger ones: when a work is out of print, it’s not worthwhile to reissue it.

Lutz hopes that the system can be used for print-on-demand, enabling people to buy works that disappeared long ago from bookshops.

And the volunteers? What’s in it for them? Badilatti is glad it is finished and that he can live more of a normal life. He assured swissinfo that he didn’t do it with an eye to enhancing his c.v., and laughed at the suggestion that at least he has got himself a good reputation in certain circles.

“Some might think that, but others think I’m crazy!”

Australia: Yugambeh Language App

A unique addition to the OzAPP Awards, this prize is awarded to that app which aims to give something back to the community as part of Curtin University’s strive to “Make Tomorrow Better”.

Congratulations to Rory O’Connor and the team at the Yugambeh Museum Language & Heritage Research Centre in Queensland.

The free Yugambeh Aboriginal Language App puts words at the fingertips of community. And it is known that using language in schools, increases the likelihood of Indigenous youth completing their education.

The Yugambeh App was part of a language–activation program called Write Into Art, trialled in south-east Queensland in 2013. This involves students composing Haiku Poetry (three line poetry, total of 17 syllables) using words off the App.

The program was so successful, the Yugambeh App is being expanded to include other languages throughout Australia.

The App and Write into Art has won the Yugambeh Museum the following prizes:

- Best Museum in Queensland 2013 – Staff of under four: Museum & Gallery Services Qld
- Highly Commended – 2013 Queensland Reconciliation Awards.
- Curtin Make Tomorrow Better Prize as part of the OzAPP Awards

Digital lifeline for aboriginal languages facing extinction

Transcript from the ABC website (Australia) of a programme broadcast on 22 April 2014

ASHLEY HALL: At the time of European colonisation, there were more than 200 Indigenous languages across Australia; there are far fewer now.

Nonetheless, linguists are working to preserve what’s left in a digital archive.

Documents from the 1960s and 70s are being scanned to ensure Aboriginal communities retain a core part of their identity.

Thomas Oriti reports.

THOMAS ORITI: This is the Yandruwandha language from the north-east corner of South Australia, spoken by Benny Kerwin.

He died in 1976 and was the last living speaker of the language. Gavan Breen began documenting Aboriginal languages like Yandruwandha across South Australia, the Northern Territory, and Queensland in the 1960s.

GAVAN BREEN: Pretty well all of the languages I worked on have no speakers left now. People in some places are trying to learn a bit. Some of them were already gone before I started. It was 1967 I did my first field trip.

THOMAS ORITI: He spent years working with the last fluent speakers of highly endangered Indigenous languages, recording words and analysing sounds.

And his wealth of knowledge extends beyond linguistics. Gavan Breen also made observations about the communities in general, including core values such as kinship and the land. He has thousands of documents covering 49 languages.

GAVAN BREEN: It’s very important to the descendants of the people who spoke the language that there’s some recording of this very big part of their heritage. It’s also important to the linguistics community, because there’s ways of saying things in these languages or ways or putting words together or putting sounds together that in some languages are unique.

THOMAS ORITI: Those documents have been archived before, but only in paper form.

GAVAN BREEN: Now it turns out that their photocopies are fading away, and that’s why there was a sudden urgency to get them archived electronically.

THOMAS ORITI: The Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity, based in Melbourne, is responding to that urgency.

Linguist Margaret Florey is coordinating the digital archive project.

MARGARET FLOREY: There were probably at least 250 languages at the time of colonisation. Now some of those languages have completely disappeared because of the processes that were associated with colonisation.

But many languages are now being reclaimed and revitalised by communities.

THOMAS ORITI: The Resource Network is working with Gavan Breen, as well as Tamsin Donaldson who documented the Ngiyampaa language in western New South Wales in the 1970s.

By the end of May, Margaret Florey is hoping to complete high quality digital scans of thousands of documents.
At Wheaton, Barbara met Joe Grimes, the son of well known Christian songwriter Homer W. Grimes, who had been a popular speaker at her church camps. Joe and Barbara attended SIL summer schools at the University of Oklahoma in 1950 and 1951. Joe preceded her to Mexico. When she joined him there after graduating from Wheaton they were married in Mexico City on 28 Feb 1952 (civil ceremony) and 1 March 1952 (church ceremony—the one they celebrated every year).

Barbara was a member of SIL International from 1951 until her death.

Joe and Barbara lived and worked among the Huichol Indians in the remote mountains of west central Mexico until they were chased out by bandits in 1963. Barbara had publications in anthropology and literacy, as well as translating Old Testament portions. During the rainy seasons Joe & Barbara went north to teach at several SIL summer schools, mostly at the University of Oklahoma (see list below). The Huichol New Testament, Cacáiyari Niquieya, was published in 1967. It has since undergone four reprints due to continuing demand and regular use. In her later years Barbara also had a supporting role in the ongoing translation of the Huichol Old Testament initiated at the request of Huichol Christians.

In 1987 Joe & Barbara became involved in the Hawai‘i Pidgin project after Joe had been a visiting professor at the University of Hawai‘i. The New Testament, Da Jesus Book, was published in 2000, and has since sold over 85,000 copies and been on the State of Hawai‘i bestseller lists 17 times. In gearing up for continuing with the Old Testament, Barbara began studying Hebrew on her 74th birthday (at the same time she was diagnosed with breast cancer, which was later treated successfully with surgery and chemotherapy).

In 1953, Richard Pittman asked Barbara to assist him in compiling a list cataloguing what languages were known to exist where, how they were related, how many people spoke them, which ones already had translation begun, and which ones still needed work to be started. In 1967 Barbara was made Assistant Editor of the Ethnologue: languages of the world. She was named Editor in 1971 and remained in that role until 2000. Under her stewardship the Ethnologue came out regularly in a new edition every four years and grew to become the world’s premier inventory of the world’s languages for linguists, anthropologists, students, researchers and missiologists. When the website was developed (www.ethnologue.com) it quickly
won awards as the “go-to” website for anyone doing language related research from anywhere in the world.

While the Ethnologue was SIL’s #1 academic best-seller, it also became a kind of battleground within the organization for clarifying ideas about “what is a language?” versus “what is a dialect?”, “what constitutes a translation need?”, what categories of information should or should not be included, making sense of widely varying approaches to language classification in different parts of the world, and many related issues. In trying to bring sense and reason to topics that many people felt passionately about, Barbara finetuned both her thinking and issues in sociolinguistics and dialectology by writing discussion papers, strategy papers, conference papers and professional publications.

The SIL board also tasked Barbara with finding languages that were “falling through the cracks” in their traditional organizational structures. In that mode, Barbara helped initiate research on migrant languages such as Plautdietsch and Pennsylvania Dutch. She also brought attention to the need for translations for the deaf (communicating through dozens of different sign languages around the world). Expanding from her work trying to understand how Hawai’i Pidgin relates to Standard English both structurally and socially, she also did a lot of research on understanding pidgins and creoles around the world. Work completed or in process in a number of creole languages around the world, is partly due to the clarity and understanding that Barbara brought into the conversation.

As a result of her work on the Ethnologue and related publications, in 1993 Wheaton College awarded her an honorary doctorate.

While Joe was alternating years as a professor of linguistics at Cornell University, and running discourse workshops for SIL in Brazil, New Guinea, Philippines, Nepal, Nigeria, Ghana, and other places, Barbara kept busy systematically refining the information in the Ethnologue for those and other countries around the world—much of it before the age of email. She also co-lectured at workshops on sociolinguistic surveys in Colombia 1982, Philippines 1984, Indonesia 1985, Malaysia 1985, and Kenya 1987.

Her three children were born and raised in Mexico, and Barbara home schooled each of them at various stages of their education. Joe & Barbara’s quiet passion for marginalized minorities and the languages they speak is reflected in their children. Marilyn Grimes Thresher worked to recruit and train Korean linguists in South Korea in the 1980s. Marilyn died in 2000 from breast cancer. Charles (Chuck) Grimes (PhD, linguistics; Australian National University) and his wife Barbara Dix Grimes (the “other Barbara Grimes”; PhD anthropology, ANU) continue to work with language communities in eastern Indonesia, East Timor, and northern Australia. Keith Grimes follows Joe’s interests in computing, working in the IT industry in Australia. Joe and Barbara also have 7 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren living in three countries.

People describe Barbara with words like: meticulous, tenacious, faithful, loyal, humble, and big picture visionary.

She was also a beautiful woman. When Barbara turned 60, a student who knew her at Wheaton and later also became a Wycliffe colleague commented, “She has hardly aged at all. She still looks as beautiful as she did at Wheaton.”

Following her death from a stroke, several emails to Joe and Chuck painted the picture of Barbara entering heaven with crowds of forgotten, marginalized and disadvantaged minorities lining the streets to cheer her home.

Chuck & Joe Grimes

Darrell Robes Kipp

ILJ Tribute to Darrell Robes Kipp, Blackfeet

Darrell Kipp has left us. Indian Country has lost an outspoken leader of Total Immersion Tribal Schools and dedicated Native man who championed heritage languages and culture. As co-founder of the Piegan Institute and the Nizipushwahsin, the Blackfeet total immersion school in Browning, Montana, he became one of the most persuasive voices for concentrated heritage language acquisition by total immersion.

The school he co-founded, Nizipushwahsin, was one of the first Native schools in Indian Country, which was fully devoted to the Blackfeet language and included instruction in their language. The challenges of creating this school were many, including the constant search for operational funds. This school has been a guide to other Indian communities for nearly 30 years.

Darrell was a friend to the Indigenous Language Institute (ILI) since ILI was formed 15 years ago. He encouraged our work and was always there as a mentor when asked. His dedication to his home community and willingness to stay home where his education could be put to the best use is an honor and inspiration to Indian Country.

Darrell was an educated man; M.Ed. 75, Harvard University. He was a Viet Nam Veteran. With his passing, he has left a legacy of fundamental activism in Indian education and the critical need to preserve and use the languages of our ancestors to become fully educated. He has also left us the challenge and opportunity to carry on his work in total Immersion in Indian Country schools and communities.

He said of his work: "Never ask permission to do your work, Never debate your decision to your language, and Do it now!!!" These and other admonitions have inspired not only the Blackfeet but anyone who heard him speak or read his writing.

We will miss your strong voice for the people, Darrell, especially our young people.

Thank you!

Walk on, Brother!!

On behalf of the Indigenous Language Institute, Board of Directors and Staff,

Jerry L. Hill, Oneida, President, Board of Directors of Indigenous Language Institute
Last known native speaker of tribal language dies

By Tim Walker, from The Independent (UK), 8 February 2014

The oldest member of the Native American Klallam tribes of the Pacific North-West and the last known native speaker of their language has died, aged 108.

Hazel Sampson, who died at a hospital in Port Angeles, Washington state on Tuesday [4 February], was taught the Klallam tongue by her parents, and only later learned English as a second language. The US government, once active in its efforts to eliminate many Native American dialects, more recently tried to rescue Klallam from extinction. The language comes from the Salish family of languages, which are spoken in the US Pacific North-west and in neighbouring South-west Canada.

Beginning in the 19th century, the US government attempted to extinguish American languages by forcing Native American children to study and speak English. Today, it is estimated that at least 100 such dialects from the US and Canada are extinct. Around 200 Native American languages are still spoken, though in most cases by only a small number of people.

Recently, as part of the attempt to save Klallam from extinction, efforts were made to compile a Klallam dictionary. While Mrs.Sampson declined to be involved in the project officially, she would often emerge from the couple’s kitchen to remind or correct her husband if he forgot or misremembered a word.

The three US Klallam tribes originate from Washington State’s Olympic Peninsula and are now thought to number around 1,700 members.

Kawsay Vida: A multimedia Quechua course for beginners and beyond


Kawsay Vida is a course book and interactive multimedia programme on DVD for the teaching and learning of the Quechua language from beginner to advanced levels. The course book is based on contemporary Bolivian Quechua, while the multimedia programme contains a section on Bolivian Quechua (beginner to intermediate levels) and a section on Southern Peruvian Quechua (advanced level). The book provides a practical introduction to spoken Quechua through the medium of English, while the multimedia programme offers a choice of English or Spanish as the medium of instruction. The video clips introduce us to Quechua speakers in the valleys of Northern Potosí (Bolivia) and Cuzco (Peru), giving a sense of immediacy that the printed page cannot achieve, and highlighting the social and cultural settings in which the language is spoken. The book contains twenty-two units of study. As students work through these, cross-references take them to relevant sections of the DVD. The Bolivian and Peruvian Quechua sections of the multimedia programme are divided into thematically and grammatically ordered modules, which introduce users to different aspects of Andean life. Users engage with the audio, video, and visual material contained in the DVD through a range of interactive exercises, which reinforce listening and comprehension skills.

With a language like Quechua, which has several regional varieties, it is a problem for course designers to agree on a particular variety as the standard. The creators of this course, in more than one medium, have been able to surmount this problem to some extent by acquainting the learner with more than one variety of Quechua.

The textbook can be used as a workbook; the copious exercises provide room for written answers. It is also profusely illustrated with scenes from Andean life. Short of actually visiting the Quechua-speaking lands, this is the most direct and engaging way to immerse oneself in this fascinating language and culture.

7. Publications, Book Reviews

The Centre Maurits Coppieters (CMC)

The Foundation has been sent the two latest publications of the Centre Maurits Coppieters in Brussels: ‘Globalism versus Internationalism’ and ‘Law and legitimacy: the denial of the Catalan voice’.

In the first one the authors underline the real debate between homogenising globalisation and internationalising diversity due to the growth of networks in the World 2.0 and the fear of some states having no other response to the crisis than a regressive homogenisation. The challenge is to ensure that globalisation becomes capable of building a democratic system of governance which defends plurality at the same time. A commitment to pluralism and diversity would help to construct new formulas for social relationships.

In the second publication, the author overviews the contrasting legal contexts and differing strategies to achieve respective independence in Scotland and Catalonia. While each is subject to the constitutional arrangements of the political; state in which they are currently incorporated, the response of the state in each case has been markedly different.

8. Places to go on the Web

Mirima Dawang Woorlab-Gerring Newsletter

The newsletter of the organization to preserve the Miriwoong language and culture of the Kimberley region of Western Australia is accessible on-line at www.mirima.org.au. Volume 12 appeared in January 2014.
New web-site for the Lombard language

An online link (free) is now available to the book by Lissant Brasca "Scriver Lombard, un’ortografia polinomeg-local per la lengua lombarda", Menaresta edition, as: http://inlombard.eu.pn/indexLmo.html

The author, Lissant Brasca, is a prominent scholar and native speaker of the Lombard language of Italy.

The Language Landscape

On 24 March 2014 in London, a ‘new kind of language map’, the Language Landscape, was launched at the Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies. The originators of this project are postgraduate students of endangered languages at the School, and committed to expanding this on-line ‘landscape’ with samples from some of the world’s smaller and neglected languages. You can visit the new site at www languagelandscape.org. To quote from the leaflet issued at the launch:

Language Landscape is a not-for-profit organisation based in London, UK. We are a small team of linguists, documenters and web developers who are interested in diversity and cultural preservation. We run a website alongside outreach programmes to bring together language communities online and help people to better understand the languages spoken around them.

Our website is designed to enable anyone with an internet connection to add language recordings to a world map. By mapping recordings where they are made, we hope to more accurately represent the geographical spread of languages around the world. Most other language maps constrain the spread of languages to political borders of geographical areas. By using an interactive map and allowing users to upload individual recordings of people speaking their own languages and dialects, we aim to demonstrate the true multilingual nature of the world around us. This promotes a better understanding of linguistic diversity and multilingualism and provides equal status for majority, minority and endangered languages.

Outreach projects

Since 2013, Language Landscape have been running educational and outreach programmes in London schools and community centres using the website.

The school programme provides students with a range of practical skills. Students receive small group tuition from university student volunteers as they develop project management and presentation skills. They design their own language mapping products and receive training in recording techniques.

9. Forthcoming events

CIDLeS Summer School 2014: Community-Driven Language Documentation (CDLD 2014)

Date & Venue: August 18th - 23rd, 2014 | Minde (Portugal)
Website: http://www.cidles.eu/summer-school-community-driven-language-documentation-2014/
Deadline for application: May 31st, 2014

About the Summer School

The field of language documentation has matured over the last 15 years. With several funding initiatives running out, community-driven language documentation ensures sustainable documentation.

This summer school is designed to encourage community-driven interdisciplinary language documentation. It will bring together speakers of endangered languages, local language workers, students and researchers of linguistics and related fields. The summer school is intended to be a space for engagement and exchange between community members, language workers and students and provide an environment for learning about each other’s interests and requirements.

The curriculum is developed to be in accordance with the needs and interests of the speech communities. It aims at empowering the speech communities to participate in the definition and implementation of research projects and sensitize students of linguistic for the needs of the communities. Thus, the major goal of this summer school is to introduce the participants into the theory and methods of language documentation. The goal is to acquire the knowledge and competence to conduct one’s own documentation projects with regard to endangered language.

This summer school is part of a larger event. The week before CDLD 2014 there will be another one-week summer school on Coding for Language Communities (http://www.cidles.eu/summer-school-coding-for-language-communities-2014/).

Topics of lectures and courses

- Audio and video recording & processing
- Annotations (transcription, translation, GRAID)
- Lexicography
- Ethnobotany
- Ethnomusicology
- Language maintenance and revitalization

CDLD 2014 will focus on the theory, methods and techniques of language documentation and revitalization and on their interdisciplinary character. Each day will consist of two learning sessions in the morning: one general lecture and a course lecture (seminar-like unit) that will introduce the participants to the course tutorials (practice unit) which will take place in the afternoon.

Invited lecturers
Ben Levine (Speaking Place, USA)
Dorothee Beermann (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim)
Julia Schulz (Speaking Place, USA)
Ulrike Mosel (University of Kiel)

Application
Participants have to apply by filling out the application form providing information on their background and interest in the area of language documentation and revitalization.

Deadline for application is May 31st, 2014. The number of participants is limited to 30. Admission will be based on the track record and a motivational statement that are part of the application form.

Costs
The summer school costs 250 Euros for the whole week. The fee includes summer school materials, all meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) and a place to sleep.

We plan to provide scholarships for students to participate in the summer school. If possible, the scholarship will cover the fee of 250 Euros and travel costs up to 1,000 Euros. Describe in the application form why you need a scholarship.

4th International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation

The 4th International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation (ICLDC), “Enriching Theory, Practice, & Application,” will be held February 26 to March 1, 2015, at the Ala Moana Hotel in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. The conference is hosted by the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa and is sponsored in part by the US National Science Foundation.

The program for this 3½ day conference will feature an integrated series of Master Classes on the documentation of linguistic structures, and a series of Sponsored Special Sessions on pedagogy in language conservation. An optional Hilo Field Study (on the Big Island of Hawai‘i) to visit Hawaiian language revitalization programs in action will immediately follow the conference.

The theme of the 4th ICLDC, “Enriching Theory, Practice, and Application,” highlights the need to strengthen the links between language documentation (practice), deep understanding of grammatical structure (theory), and methods for teaching endangered languages (application). At this conference, we intend to focus on language documentation as the investigation of grammar and linguistic structure on the one hand, and the development of that investigation into sound pedagogy for endangered languages on the other. We hope you will join us.

For more information and links to past conferences, visit our conference website: http://icldc-hawaii.org/

1. Call for proposals: regular conference talks, posters, and electronic posters
Proposal deadline: August 31, 2014

Topics
We especially welcome abstracts that address the conference theme, “Enriching Theory, Practice, & Application.” Discipline-wide reflection on the relationship between the documentation of grammatical structure and language pedagogy is crucial if the proper documentation and conservation of endangered languages is to be effective. Our aim here is two-fold: to create citizen scientists who can reflect on their language for the purpose of teaching and documenting without being hindered by metalanguage, and to enrich the contributions of linguists to linguistic theory and description via documentation.

We are also seeking abstracts on the science of documentation and revitalization. Documentation is usually portrayed as a means of collecting language data, and revitalization is generally seen primarily as a kind of applied work directly benefiting communities. However, each of those domains is a genuine area of research, and we welcome presentations that treat documentation and revitalization not merely as activities, but also as domains requiring discussion, clarification, and theorization in their own right.

In addition to the topics above, we warmly welcome abstracts on other subjects in language documentation and conservation:

Archiving
Community experiences of revitalization
Data management
Ethical issues
Language planning
Lexicography and grammar design
Methods of assessing ethnolinguistic vitality
Orthography design
Teaching/learning small languages
Technology in documentation – methods and pitfalls
Topics in areal language documentation
Training in documentation methods – beyond the univ.
Assessing documentation and revitalization strategies

Presentation formats
Papers will be allowed 20 minutes for presentation with 10 minutes of question time.

Posters will be on display throughout the day of presentation. Poster presentations will run during the early afternoon. Poster presentations are recommended for authors who wish to present smaller, more specific topics, or descriptions of particular projects.

Electronic posters (e-posters) are opportunities for presentations of software, websites, and other computer-based projects, in an environment that allows face-to-face interaction with the audience. Similar to a traditional poster session, e-poster presenters will use their own laptop computers to display their projects while the audience walks around, watching demonstrations and asking questions. E-poster sessions will take place in the early afternoon in a room with tables and internet access.

2. Call for proposals: sponsored special sessions on pedagogy in language conservation
Proposal deadline: May 31, 2014

Special Session Topics and Format
This year, we are inviting proposals for a series of four Special Sessions on Pedagogy in Language Conservation. Each session
will contain four talks and will be focused on a theme relating to the notion of pedagogy for endangered language teaching.

Endangered language teaching in the language community is often informed by only the most generic of language pedagogies, and language teachers are often frustrated by the lack of methodologies that go beyond short conversation, basic vocabulary, and constructions that can be taught by methods like Total Physical Response (e.g., Asher 1969). Compounding the problem, these same trained teachers may not have enough linguistic knowledge of the subject language to develop robust teaching materials and programs, while linguists with command of linguistic structure may not have the teaching training required to properly educate students or inform language teachers.

In the past we have followed the “Ken Hale” model of training endangered language speakers in linguistics. We have created reference grammars and pedagogical grammars, and most documentation projects include some component for creating teaching materials. What is still lacking from the discipline is a systematic discussion of how to transform documentary materials like annotated corpora and reference grammars into an effective pedagogical workflow for endangered languages (e.g., reference grammar to pedagogical grammar to teaching materials to pedagogical methods to assessment of teaching programs). There is a disconnect between linguistic theory and pedagogical theory, and we aim to bridge this gap during these Special Sessions.

Each Special Session on Pedagogy in Language Conservation will consist of four 20-minute presentation slots, with each slot to be followed by a 10 minute question period. One Special Session will occur each day of the conference in the same room and time. A total of four Special Sessions will be invited to present at the ICLDC.

Successful proposals will be **thematicall unified on a particular aspect** of pedagogy in language conservation. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Acquisition: What can L1 and L2 acquisition studies teach us that is relevant for developing classroom materials and curricula?
- Teaching methods: What language teaching methods and activities can be brought to endangered language teachers to enhance language learning and retention?
- Understanding and conveying complex grammar: What specific activities in the classroom could be used to teach higher level constructions (e.g., complex clauses, information structure, or particle use)?
- Assessment: How can we properly assess teaching programs for radically less commonly taught languages?

**Sponsorship details**

Thanks to generous support from the US National Science Foundation, we are able to offer sponsorship in the form of travel assistance in the amount of US$2400 for each selected Special Session. The organizer of each Session will determine how that sum is to be divided among the speakers and will inform the ICLDC Executive Committee; depending on each circumstance, funds will be provided as (partial) flight reimbursements, hotel nights, or per diem payments (to be determined by the ICLDC Executive Committee).

3. **Abstract submission**

**Rules for submission in all categories:**

Abstracts should be submitted in English, but presentations can be in any language. We particularly welcome presentations in languages of the region discussed.

Authors may submit no more than one individual and one co-authored proposal (including participation in a Special Session proposal), or no more than two co-authored proposals. In no case may an author submit more than one individually-authored proposal.


Proposals for general papers, posters, and electronic posters are **due by August 31, 2014**, with notification of acceptance by October 1, 2014.

Individual authors whose proposals for the Special Sessions are rejected are welcome to submit their abstracts individually to the call for general proposals.

We will not be accepting any proposals for panel presentations or colloquia beyond the Special Sessions on Pedagogy in Language Conservation.

Because of limited space, please note that the Abstract Review Committee may ask that some general abstracts submitted as papers be presented as posters or electronic posters instead.

Selected authors will be invited to submit their conference papers to the journal *Language Documentation & Conservation* for publication.

4. **Timeline**

- April 1, 2014: Call for Proposals announced
- May 31, 2014: Proposals for Special Sessions on Pedagogy in Language Conservation deadline
- June 30, 2014: Notification of acceptance to Special Sessions
- August 31, 2014: Proposals for general papers, posters, and electronic posters deadline
- October 1, 2014: Notification of acceptance for general papers, posters, and electronic posters
- October 1, 2014: Early registration opens
- January 15, 2015: Early registration deadline
- February 26-March 1, 2015: 4th ICLDC

5. **Scholarships**

To help defray travel expenses to come and present at the conference, scholarships of up to US$1,500 will be awarded to the six best abstracts by (i) students and/or (ii) members of an endangered language community who are actively working to document their heritage language and who are not employed by a college or university. If you are eligible and wish to be considered for a scholarship, please select the appropriate “Yes” button on the proposal submission form. This is applicable to regular conference papers only (not to the Special Sessions).

Andrea L. Berez, Victoria Anderson, and Jim Yoshioka
4th ICLDC Executive Committee
1. FEL Manifesto

1.1. Preamble

At this point in human history, most human languages are spoken by exceedingly few people. And that majority, the majority of languages, is about to vanish.

The most authoritative source on the languages of the world (Ethnologue, Gordon 2005) lists just over 6,900 living languages. Population figures are available for just over 6,600 of them (or 94.5%). Of these 6,600, it may be noted that:

- 56% are spoken by fewer than 10,000 people; 28% by fewer than 1,000; and 83% are restricted to single countries, and so are particularly exposed to the policies of a single government. At the other end of the scale, 10 major languages, each spoken by over 100 million people, are the mother tongues of almost half (49%) of the world’s population.

More important than this snapshot of proportions and populations is the outlook for survival of the languages we have. Hard comparable data here are scarce or absent, often because of the sheer variety of the human condition: a small community, isolated or bilingual, may continue for centuries to speak a unique language, while in another place a populous language may face social or political reasons die out in little more than a generation. Another reason is that the period in which records have been kept is too short to document a trend: e.g. the Ethnologue has been issued only since 1951. However, it is difficult to imagine many communities sustaining serious daily use of a language for even a generation with fewer than 100 speakers; yet at least 10% of the world’s living languages are now in this position.

Some of the forces which make for language loss are clear: the impacts of urbanization, Westernization and global communications grow daily, all serving to diminish the self-sufficiency and self-confidence of small and traditional communities. Discriminatory policies, and population movements also take their toll of languages.

In our era, the preponderance of tiny language communities means that the majority of the world’s languages are vulnerable not just to decline but to extinction.

1.2. The Likely Prospect

There is agreement among linguists who have considered the situation that over half of the world’s languages are moribund, i.e. not effectively being passed on to the next generation. We and our children, then, are living at the point in human history where, within perhaps two generations, most languages in the world will die out.

This mass extinction of languages may not appear immediately life-threatening. Some will feel that a reduction in numbers of languages will ease communication, and perhaps help build nations, even global solidarity. But it has been well pointed out that the success of humanity in colonizing the planet has been due to our ability to develop cultures suited for survival in a variety of environments. These cultures have everywhere been transmitted by languages, in oral traditions and latterly in written literatures. So when language transmission itself breaks down, especially before the advent of literacy in a culture, there is always a large loss of inherited knowledge.

Valued or not, that knowledge is lost, and humanity is the poorer. Along with it may go a large part of the pride and self-identity of the community of former speakers. And there is another kind of loss, of a different type of knowledge. As each language dies, science, in linguistics, anthropology, prehistory and psychology, loses one more precious source of data, one more of the diverse and unique ways that the human mind can express itself through a language’s structure and vocabulary.

We cannot now assess the full effect of the massive simplification of the world’s linguistic diversity now occurring. But language loss, when it occurs,
A further illustration from the Rätoromanische Chrestomathie, Switzerland, now available in digital form; see p.15 in this issue